



Permanency Values & Court Engagement:

Who *Wouldn't* Want a Family?

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Who Wouldn't Want a Family?

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Topics for Today

Paradigm Shift: A change from one way of thinking to another. It's a revolution, a transformation, a sort of metamorphosis. It just does not happen, but rather it is driven by agents of change. Kuhn, 1970

- **What is Permanence & Why so Important?**
- **How? The “5-step Approach”**
- **What is Engagement & Why so Important?**
- **Role of Judges & Courts in achieving and supporting Permanence - NOT to DO social work, but serve as inspiration, support for good social work and accountability mechanism**

30 Years Ago, Mary Aged out of Care ~
Happy Birthday, Mary ~
You're Free!



OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH IN CARE

- Only 37% graduate High School less than 2% obtain a bachelor's degree
- Less Likely to be employed
- Poverty level incomes
- No health insurance
- Serious untreated health conditions
- 12-22% of youth who 'age out' of care are homeless from day one
- More likely to have children outside out of marriage
- Post traumatic stress rate double Gulf War veterans
- Over 270,000 American prisoners once in foster care
- 12-22% of youth who 'age out' of care are homeless from day one



Youth in Foster Care: What do they need?



- **Safety = both physical & psychological**
- Permanent Family Connections and Caring Adults
- Skills & Resources
- Appropriate Supportive Services

“Who wouldn’t want a family?

Who wouldn’t want to have a family to spend holidays with, to call when things don’t go right, or to call when things are great to celebrate? Who wouldn’t want that?”



Permanence:

What is It? –

Permanence: What is it?

My working definition



- A parent or two – A parenting relationship with at least one adult
- Intent – a mutual understanding that this relationship is intended to last forever
- Unconditional commitment by the adult(s)
- Participation of all parties in the relationship
- Lifelong and mutual support and involvement
- Intimacy & Belonging – “My son”, “my mom”
- Status How the world views your relationships

WHAT is Permanence?

A Youth Perspective

- PERMANENCE is **NOT** a place ~
- Permanency is a state of mind,
not a placement;
- Permanence is having the feeling that you are
connected,
- That there is someone *in the middle of the night* who
will answer your *collect* phone call
- Or *miss you* when you don't show up



Creating a Context – Bringing it Home IS PERMANENCE FOR ME?



- Over 18? ~ 21?
- Competent? ~ Do I have Skills?
- Do I use services?
- Why need a family?
- My own permanent family – Under one roof?

Genuine Permanence:

3 Tests

- **The “Miss-me-when-I-don’t-show-up” Test**
- **The “Age 34” Test**
- **The “Hospital” Test**

JD Story – Value of Siblings



Renee story – “Age 34 Test”



“The Hospital Test” Dedicated to Cheyenne Raul & Dylan



*They will soar on
wings like eagles;
they will run and not
grow weary, they will
walk and not be faint*

Isaiah 40:31



If we understand the
importance of permanence –
why can't we achieve it for all
of our children and youth?

“FAMILIES ARE NOWHERE”

5 + 5 + 5 = Forever

- EVERYONE needs to be “**P.O’ed**” (Nancy Salyers)
“**Permanency Oriented**”
- Keep a sense of **URGENCY** - no more continuances! Child’s sense of time
- Use a **TEAM APPROACH** for planning and decision making – Judge IS part of team
- Think about **WHO** to include
- **5 Steps + 5 Networks + 5 Questions**

FIVE Steps for Creating An Individual Permanency Plan

1. Preparation
2. Gathering a **Team**
3. Developing a **Plan**
4. Investigating **Resources**
5. On-going **Follow up**, De-Briefing, continual learning & quality assurance



Step 1: Preparation – Understanding the Options

Many Doors to Permanency for Youth

- Youth are **reunified** safely with their parents or relatives
- Youth are **adopted** by relatives or other families
- Youth permanently reside with relatives or other families as **legal guardians**
- Youth are connected to permanent resources via fictive **kinship** or customary adoption networks
- *Youth are safely placed in another planned alternative permanent living arrangement which is closely reviewed for appropriateness every six months*



Step One Permanency Options

- Does planning for permanence begin immediately?
- Are all options discussed and understood by agency staff? Courts? Advocates? Youth? Parents & other prospective caregivers?
- Are tools such as comparison charts available?
- Is full team engaged in review of all permanency options to make informed decision about best option for individual youth



A successful plan depends on Meaningful & Effective Engagement

- COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION vs COMPLIANCE AND COLLOBORATION (Thanks Judge Fitzgerald!)
- How do you know it when you see it? (elements?)
- Why is engagement so difficult –
 - Family & Youth experiences with trauma
 - Cultural issues
 - Our own issues, biases, life experiences

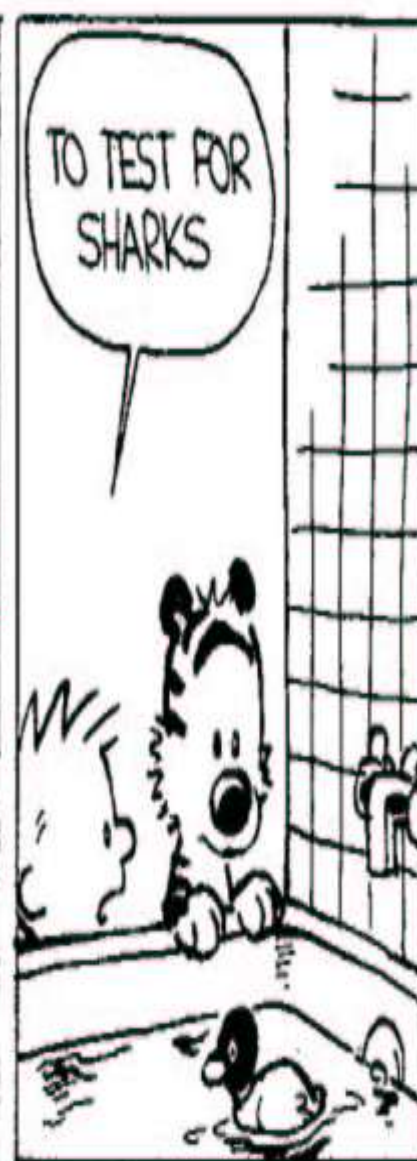




...I ALWAYS PUT MY
DUCKY IN FIRST.



WILSON



Cultural Challenges to Engagement

- Eye contact story
- Indian children



WHO

Step 2 – Creating the Team ~

Needs to Be Included as Part of the Team?

- **WHO** does this young person **SPEND TIME** with?
- **WHO** did he **EVER spend time** with?
- **WHO** is **CONNECTED** to him – even if they don't know it?
- **WHO** has **EXPERTISE** related to his needs?
- **WHO** has a **NETWORK** related to his interests, talents, strengths?



Step 3 – Create and work the plan

FIVE KEY QUESTIONS

- What will it take?
- What can we try again that has been tried before?
- What can we do differently?
- What can we do concurrently?
- How can we engage the youth in developing & implementing the plan?



Give All Youth A Voice in their Own Lives ~ *Nothing About Me Without Me*

These young people are often invisible to the systems and courts that serve them

“There’s not much interaction or input when you go to court. You’re not included. My judge never interacts with me. I feel like no one actually listens.”

12 year old in Nebraska



- “Having a child in court will benefit both the child, by increasing their participation and understanding, and the process, by forcing other players to deal with the child as an individual.”

Attorney from New York





- “Going to court was helpful because it kept me informed of what was going to happen, it allowed me to be able to share my concerns and wishes, and it helped me better understand the legal aspects of being in care.”

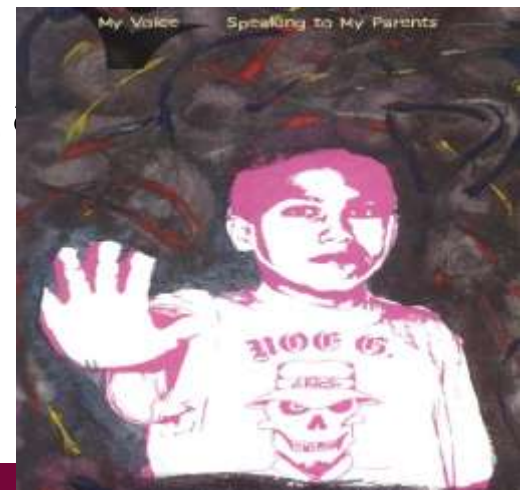
Foster care alumna from New York



- “It was scary but it felt like I had some control.” Foster care alumna in California
- “It is worth it to go to court. If you hear things from others, it might not be the truth.” 15 year old foster youth in Nebraska

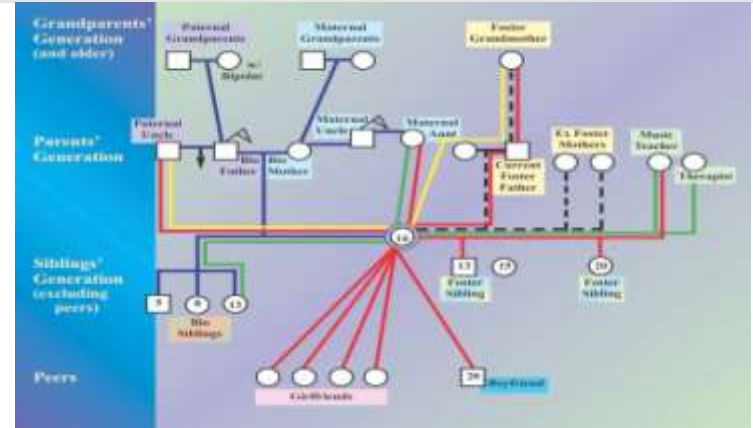
When a Youth Says “NO”

- **I am ready for independence, I don't need more adults telling me what to do!**
- **I don't want to get dragged down by my crazy family and their issues**
- **Adoption is for babies – I am not a baby!**
- **I am happy where I am – I don't want to move**
- **I don't want to lose important connections to my siblings, grandparents, birth parents, former foster parents**
- **I need to protect myself from being hurt**
- **I don't want to change my name**
- **I'm scared**
- **No one will want me**



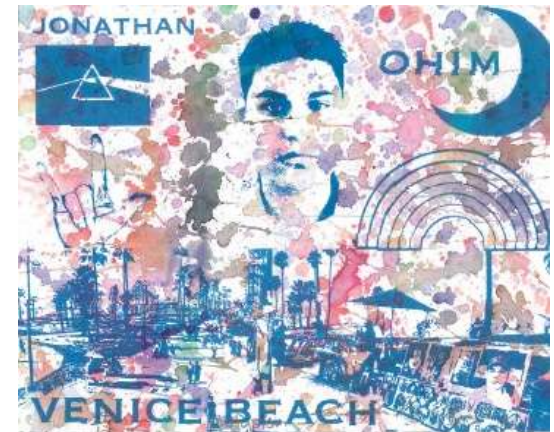
Getting Past the “NO” - TOOLS

- Connections Chart
- Genogram, Ecomap
- Placement Mapping
- Permanency Oriented File Review
- Strategic use of visits
- Lifebook – traditional, or Digital Stories
- Visioning Exercise to Consider Goals, Hopes, Dreams



Step 4: Investigating Resources

- Identify both formal and informal resources
 - Use resources the youth is familiar with as a starting pt
- Formal resources – agencies, providers
 - Applications, enrollment, waiting period
 - Eligibility, fees, alternatives
- Informal resources
 - Current foster family
 - Extended family, “fictive” kin, neighbors
 - Peers, social network of the youth
 - Community of faith, other NGOs
 - Civic orgs, Corp/business community



Step Five ~ Follow up: & On-Going Support



- Ensure that each step of plan is being implemented
- Purposeful/P.O.'ed activities on visits, i.e. lifebook, journaling, art, hobbies (strength-building)
- Check back, revise, modify from time to time as needed
- Post-permanency services must be put in place to support any permanency plan

Are we
“P.O’ed” Yet?

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